

Australian

# U.F.O.

Bulletin

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NEWSLETTER  
February 1972.

In the last two issues of the Australian U.F.O. Bulletin (September 1971 and October 1971) we published excerpts from a paper, "Science In Default", which was presented to the 134th Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science by the late Professor James E. McDonald on 27th December 1969.

In the last issue of The Bulletin (October 1971) we also published excerpts from the personal lecture notes, "Lecture About Flying Saucers - 1954", of Professor Hermann Oberth.

We now continue the publication of further excerpts from the aforementioned papers of these two eminent scientists - the late Professor James E. McDonald who was one of the top atmospheric scientists in the United States and Professor Hermann Oberth who was co-designer of the V2 rocket and who taught rocketry to Wernher von Braun.

(continuing) SCIENCE IN DEFAULT:

-22 Years of Inadequate UFO Investigations-

James E. McDonald

Discussion (of Case 1, see October Bulletin): This incident is an especially good example of a UFO case in which observer credibility and reliability do not come into serious question, a case in which more than one - here three - channel of information figures in the over-all observations, and a case in which the reported phenomena appear to defy explanation in terms of either natural or technological phenomena.

In the Condon Report, the important initial incident in which the unknown 2800 MC source appeared to orbit the RB-47 near Gulfport is omitted. In the Condon Report, the reader is given no hint that the object was with the aircraft for over 600 miles and for over an hour. No clear sequence of these events is spelled out, nor is the reader made aware of all of the "three-channel" simultaneous appearances or disappearances that were so emphatically stressed to me by both Chase and McClure in my interviews with them. But even despite those degrees of incompleteness, any reader of the account of this case in the Condon Report must wonder that an incident of this sort could be left as unexplained and yet ultimately treated, along with the other unexplained cases in that Report, as calling for no further scientific attention.

.....here we have a well-reported, multi-channel, multiple-witness UFO report, coming in fact from within the Air Force itself, investigated by the Condon Report team, conceded to be unexplained, and yet it is, in final analysis, ignored by Dr. Condon. In no section of the Report specifically written by the principal investigator does he even allude to this intriguing case. My question is how such events can be written off as demanding no further scientific study. (to page 2)

CASE 2. Kirtland AFB, New Mexico, November 4, 1957.

Brief summary: Two CAA control tower operators observed a lighted egg-shaped object descend to and cross obliquely the runway area at Kirtland AFB (Albuquerque), hover near the ground for tens of seconds, then climb at unprecedented speed into the overcast. On radar, it was then followed south some miles, where it orbited a number of minutes before returning to the airfield to follow an Air Force aircraft outbound from Kirtland.

Introduction: This case, discussed in the Condon Report on p. 141, is an example of a UFO report which had lain in Bluebook files for years, not known to anyone outside of Air Force circles.

Immediately upon reading it, I became quite curious about it; more candidly, I became quite suspicious about it. For, as you will note on reading it for yourself, it purports to explain an incident in terms of an hypothesis with some glaringly improbable assumptions, and makes a key assertion that is hard to regard as factual. Let me quote from the first descriptive paragraph: "Observers in the CAA (now FAA) control tower saw an unidentified dark object with a white light underneath, about the 'shape of an automobile on end', that crossed the field at about 1500 feet and circled as if to come in for a landing on the E-W runway. This unidentified object appeared to reverse direction at low altitude, while out of sight of the observers behind some buildings, and climbed suddenly to about 200-300 feet, heading away from the field on a 120° course. Then it went into a steep climb and disappeared into the overcast." The Condon Report next notes that: "The Air Force view is that this UFO was a small, powerful private aircraft, flying without flight plan, that became confused and attempted a landing at the wrong airport. The pilot apparently realized his error when he saw a brightly-lit restricted area, which was at the point where the object reversed direction..." The Report next remarks very briefly that the radar blip from this object was described by the operator as a "perfectly normal aircraft return", that the radar track "showed no characteristics that would have been beyond the capabilities of the more powerful private aircraft available at the time", and the conclusion arrived at in the Condon Report, without further discussion, is that: "There seems to be no reason to doubt the accuracy of this analysis."

Some Suspect Features of the Condon Report's Explanation: It seemed to me that there were several reasons "to doubt the accuracy of this analysis". First, let me point out that the first line or two of the account in the Condon Report contains information that the incident took place with "light rain over the airfield", late in the evening (2245-2305 MST), which I found to be correct, on checking meteorological records. Thus the reader is asked to accept the picture of a pilot coming into an unfamiliar airfield at night and under rain conditions, and doing a 180° turn at so low an altitude that it could subsequently climb suddenly to about 200-300 feet; and we are asked to accept the picture of this highly hazardous low-altitude nighttime turn being executed so sharply that it occurred "while out of sight of the observers behind some buildings". Now these are not casual bystanders doing the observing, but CAA controllers in a tower designed and located to afford full view of all aircraft operations occurring in or near its airfield. Hence my reaction to all of this was a reaction of doubt. Pilots don't live too long who execute strange and dangerous maneuvers of the type implied in this explanation. And CAA towers are not located in such a manner that "buildings" obscure so large a block of airfield-airspace as to permit aircraft to do 180° turns while hidden from tower view behind them (at night, in a rain!).

Search for the Principal Witnesses: The foregoing points put such strong a priori doubt upon the "private aircraft" explanation advanced in the Condon Report that I began an independent check on this case, just as I have been checking several dozen other Condon Report cases in the months since publication of the Report. Here, (to page 3)

as in all other cases in the Report, there are no witness-names given to facilitate independent check, but by beginning my inquiries through the FAA, I soon got in touch with the two CAA tower observers, both of whom are still with FAA, one in Oklahoma, one in California. Concurrently, I initiated a number of inquiries concerning the existence of any structures back in 1957 that could have hidden an aircraft from tower view in the manner suggested by the Report. What I ultimately learned constitutes only one example of many that back up the statement I have been making recently to many professional groups: The National Academy of Sciences is going to be in a most awkward position when the full picture of the inadequacies of the Condon Report is recognized; for I believe it will become all too obvious that the Academy placed its weighty stamp on this dismal report without even a semblance of rigorous checking of its contents.

The two tower controllers, R.M. Kaser and E.G. Brink, with whom I have had a total of five telephone interviews in the course of clarifying the case, explained to me that the object was so unlike an aircraft and exhibited performance characteristics so unlike those of any aircraft flying then or now that the "private aircraft" explanation was quite amusing. Neither had heard of the Air Force explanation, neither had heard of the Condon Project concurrence therein, and, most disturbing of all, neither had ever heard of the Condon Project: No one on the Condon Project ever contacted these two men! A half-million-dollar Project, a Report filled with expensive trivia and matters shedding essentially no light on the heart of the UFO puzzle, and no Project investigator even bothers to hunt down the two key witnesses in this case, so casually closed by easy acceptance of the Bluebook "aircraft" explanation.

Failure to locate those two men as part of the investigation of this case is all the more difficult to understand because CAA tower operators involved as witnesses of a UFO incident while actually on duty would seem to constitute just the type of witnesses one should most earnestly seek out in attempts to clarify the UFO puzzle. In various sections of the Condon Report, witness-shortcomings (lack of experience, lack of familiarity with observing things in the sky, basic lack of credibility, etc.) are lamented, yet here, where the backgrounds of the witnesses and the observing circumstances are highly favorable to getting reliable testimony, the Colorado group did not bother to locate the witnesses. (This is not an isolated example. Even in cases which were conceded to be Unexplained, such as the June 23, 1955 Mohawk Airlines multiple-witness sighting near Utica, N.Y., p.143 in the Report, or the Jackson, Alabama, November 14, 1956 airline case, both conceded to be Unexplained, I found on interviewing key witnesses as part of my cross-check on the Condon Report, that no one from Colorado had ever talked to the witnesses. In still other important instances, only a fraction of the available witnesses were queried in preparing the Condon Report. Suggestions that the Report was based on intensive investigatory work simply are not correct.)

Information Gained from Witness-Interviews: When I contacted Kaser and Brink, they told me I was the first person to query them on the case since their interrogation by an Air Force captain from Colorado Springs, who had come to interview them at Kirtland just after the incident. Subsequently, I secured the Bluebook case-file on this sighting, and ascertained that a Capt. Patrick O. Shere, from Ent AFB did the interrogation on Nov. 8, 1957, just four days after the sighting.

The accounts I secured in 1969 from Kaser and Brink matched impressively the information I found in Shere's 1957 report in the Bluebook case-file. There were a few recollective discrepancies of distance or time estimates in the witness accounts given in 1969, as compared with their 1957 statements to the Air Force, but the agreements were far more significant than the small number of mis-matches.

In contrast to the somewhat vague impressions I gained (and other readers would surely also gain) from reading the Condon Report version, here is what is in the Bluebook case-file and what they told me directly.

The object came down in a rather steep dive at the east end of Runway 26, left the flight line, crossed runways, taxiways and unpaved areas at about a 30-degree angle, and proceeded southwestward towards the CAA tower at an altitude they estimated at a few tens of feet above ground. Quickly getting 7X binoculars on it, they established that it had no wings, tail, or fuselage, was elongated in the vertical direction, and exhibited a somewhat egg-shaped form (Kaser). It appeared to be perhaps 15-20 feet in vertical dimension, about the size of an automobile on end, and had a single white light in its base. Both men were emphatic in stressing to me that it in no way resembled an aircraft.

It came towards them until it reached a B-58 service pad near the northeast corner of Area D (Drumhead Area, a restricted area lying south of the E-W runway at Kirtland). That spot lay about 3000 feet ENE of the tower, near an old machine-gun calibration bunker still present at Kirtland AFB. There it proceeded to stop completely, hover just above ground in full view for a time that Kaser estimated at about 20 seconds, that Brink suggested to me was more like a minute, and that the contemporary Air Force interrogation implied as being rather more than a minute. Next they said it started moving again, still at very low altitude, still at modest speed, until it again reached the eastern boundary of the field. At that point, the object climbed at an extremely rapid rate (which Kaser said was far faster than that of such modern jets as the T-38).

The Bluebook report expresses the witness' estimate of the climb rate as 45,000 ft/min, which is almost certainly a too-literal conversion from Mach 1. My phone-interview notes include a quote of Brink's statement to me that, "There was no doubt in my mind that no aircraft I knew of then, or ever operating since then, would compare with it." Both men were emphatic in stating to me that at no time was this object hidden by any buildings. I confirmed through the Albuquerque FAA office that Area D has never had anything but chain-link fence around it, and that no buildings other than scattered one-story metal buildings ever existed either inside or outside Area D in that sector. The bunker is only about 15-20 feet high, judging from my own recent observations and photos of it from the air. The Bluebook interrogation report contains no statements hinting that the object was ever hidden from view by any structures (although the Bluebook file contains the usual number of internally inconsistent and confusingly presented details).

I asked both men whether they alerted anyone else while the foregoing events were taking place. They both indicated that the object was of such unprecedented nature that it wasn't until it shot up into the overcast that they got on the phone to get the CAA Radar Approach Control (RAPCON) unit to look for a fast target to the east. Kaser recalled that a CPN-18 surveillance radar was in use at that RAPCON unit at that time, a point confirmed to me in subsequent correspondence with the present chief of the Albuquerque Airport Traffic Control Tower, Mr. Robert L. Behrens, who also provided other helpful information. Unfortunately, no one who was in the Albuquerque/Kirtland RAPCON unit in 1957 is now available, and the person who Kaser thought was actually on the CPN-18 that night is now deceased. Thus I have only Kaser and Brink's recollections of the radar-plotting of the unknown, plus the less than precise information in the Nov. 6, 1957 TWX to Bluebook. Capt. Shere did not, evidently, take the trouble to secure any information from radar personnel. (to page 4)

As seen on the RAPCON CPN-18, the unknown target was still moving in an easterly direction when the alert call came from the tower. It then turned southward, and as Kaser recalled, moved south at very high speed, though nothing is said about speed in the Kirtland TWX of Nov. 6, 1957. It proceeded a number of miles south towards the vicinity of the Albuquerque Low Frequency Range Station, orbited there for a number of minutes, came back north to near Kirtland, took up a trail position about a half-mile behind an Air Force C-46 just then leaving Kirtland, and moved offscope with the C-46. The Nov. 8, 1957 report from Commander, 34th Air Div. to ADC and to the Air Technical Intelligence Command closed with the rather reasonable comment: "Sighting and descriptions conform to no known criteria for identification of UFOs." The followup report of Nov. 13, 1957, prepared by Air Intelligence personnel from Ent AFB, contains a number of relevant comments on the experience of the two witnesses (23 years of tower control work between them as of that date), and on their intelligence, closing with the remarks: "In the opinion of the interviewer, both sources (witnesses) are considered competent and reliable."

Critique of the Evaluation in the Condon Report: The Kirtland AFB case is a rather good (though not isolated) instance of the general point I feel obliged to make on the basis of my continuing check of the Condon Report: In it we have not been given anything superior to the generally casual and often incompetent level of case-analysis that marked Bluebook's handling of the UFO problem in past years.

In the Bluebook files, this case is carried as "Possible Aircraft". Study of the 21-page case-file reveals that this is based solely on passing comment made by Capt. Shere in closing his summary letter of Nov. 8: "The opinion of the preparing officer is that this object may possibly have been an unidentified aircraft, possibly confused by the runways at Kirtland AFB. The reasons for this opinion are: (a) The observers are considered competent and reliable sources, and in the opinion of this interviewer actually saw an object they could not identify. (b) The object was tracked on a radar scope by a competent operator. (c) The object does not meet identification criteria for any other phenomena."

The stunning non sequitur of that final conclusion might serve as an epitome of 22 years of Air Force response to unexplainable objects in our air-space. But when one then turns to the Condon Report's analysis and evaluation, a Report that was identified to the public and the scientific community as the definitive study of UFOs, no visible improvement is found. Ignoring almost everything of interest in the case-file except that a lighted airborne object came down near Kirtland airfield and left, the Condon Report covers this whole intriguing case in two short paragraphs, cites the Air Force view, embellishes it a bit by speaking of the lost aircraft as "powerful" (presumably to account for its observed Mach 1 climb-out) and suggesting that it was "flying without flight plan" (this explains why it was wandering across runways and taxiways at night, in a rain, at an altitude of a few tens of feet), and the Report then closes off the case with a terse conclusion: "There seems to be no reason to doubt the accuracy of this analysis."

Two telephone calls to the two principal witnesses would have confronted the Colorado investigators with emphatic testimony, supporting the contents (though not the conclusions) of the Bluebook file, and that would have rendered the suggested "powerful private aircraft" explanation untenable. By not contacting the witnesses and by overlooking most of the salient features of the reported observations, this UFO report has been left safely in the "explained" category where Bluebook put it. One has here a sample of the low scientific level of investigative and evaluative work that will be so apparent to any who take the trouble to study carefully and thoroughly the Condon Report on UFOs. AAAS members are urged to study it carefully for themselves and to decide whether it would be scientifically advisable to accept it as the final word on the 22-year-long puzzle of the UFO problem. I submit that it is most inadvisable.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

(Eds. - In the next issue of The Bulletin we will begin Case 3 of the four principal UFO cases referred to by Professor McDonald in his Symposium paper - four cases presented before the AAAS as specific illustrations of what he regarded as serious shortcomings of case-investigations in the Condon Report and in the 1947-69 Air Force UFO program.)

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(continuing)

LECTURE NOTES FOR LECTURE ABOUT FLYING SAUCERS (1954).

by Professor Hermann Oberth

2. Explanations: The following can be said about these appearances:

a) The whole thing is not true!

i. Rumour.....

ii. Humbug - there was a farmer in France who launched balloons filled with hot air. He later explained that he just wanted to see the name of his community in the newspaper. In South Germany, a man painted children's balloons with luminescent paint and launched them in the evening, and there came UFO reports from this area.

iii. Sometimes they are mistaken objects. For instance, someone saw seven shining points flying in a V-formation in the light of a reflector. As they switched on a second reflector, it turned out that the points were the bright bellies of wild geese.

Against this, I cannot accept the following explanation: if a shining object is located on the ground - for instance, a lamp, and it reflects in the upper glass of an airplane cockpit, the pilot would think there is a shining object flying above him. An experienced pilot should be able to distinguish between a reflection on the windshield and a real object.

Likewise, the explanation of a mirage does not satisfy me. First of all, they are very rare in our area - how many mirages did you see in your life? And often enough UFOs appeared at times when a mirage was impossible according to weather maps. After all, mirages do not show flying disks but lakes, palms, castles...

(to page 5)

iv. I shall refer later to this explanation as electric discharge phenomena.

b) There are several things which have been reported as UFOs, for instance, weather balloons. Three ladies from New York wrote me in the Autumn of 1954 that I should know they saw a UFO and reported it to the Air Force, which answered that the object was a registered balloon. An accurate description followed to me, so accurate that I could only reply: "My ladies, I also think that it was a registered balloon!"

Eventually one also mistakes airplanes which fly near the horizon that reflect sunshine as UFOs, sometimes meteors, in one case a large missile.

In Prague, then in Vienna, we were first to develop during the war an instrument which really looks like a UFO: V7. It was a helicopter, and had two wings of 25 meters length, and at the ends were "staurohre" (ram jets).

A staurohr is started with a rocket and begins to work at a speed of 700 m/sec., reaching its maximum effectiveness at 1200 to 1400 m/sec., but it cannot fly much faster because of the high development of heat inside.

The air comes in at the front. It is compressed and grows hot. Fuel is put in at Point A, developing additional heat. And because of the pressure due to the expansion of air, it escapes and the tube is pushed.

If a V7 is suspended over a countryside, not much fuel is needed, and therefore the flame blaze appears dark red. Due to the high speed of the wing, the flame appears as a dark red ring on the sky. The speed of the end of the rotating ring is 900 m/sec. From a greater distance, the whole thing looks like a shining disk. The flame becomes brighter at higher speeds. At high speeds, the implement turns and flies with the plane perpendicular to the flight direction. As the Russians have a part of the V7 plans, and built the vehicle, a part of the reported UFOs may be from there.

Helmut v. Zborowsky in France is building machines similar to the V7. Although there is some doubt in the function of the V7, a number of reports lead to the assumption that there are such machines.

But not all! First of all, the V7 flies with much noise, but most UFO reports specify complete noiselessness. Secondly, they also produce a contrail (vapor trail) in the atmosphere - the UFOs do not.

Thirdly, they can only reach speeds of 1½ km/sec. Fourthly, there were no V7 machines in 1461.

There are reports from that year which we cannot neglect. The historian for Philipp des Guten von Burgund reported on the All Saint's Day in 1461 that a disk appeared over Arras in France, which was half as large as the moon, and flew exciting figures. There are further reports from that time which cannot be considered as impressive because in case somebody wanted to impress others at that time, he rather talked about meeting with Saints.

The official American office which deals with these reports is the ATIC (Air Technical Intelligence Center). Until 1952, their work had been available for quite a number of people; today it is secret. Until 1952, the Center collected 3200 reports. Of them, somewhat more than 50% have been identified as things that I have previously presented (as UFO explanations); i.e., the seven wild geese, balloons, V7, etc. The next 40% have not been identified, but are so similar to the (other) identified things that they probably are hoaxes, hallucinations, or earthly objects, too.

Against that (there are) 34 reports that cannot be explained this way, and if one allows further explanations, there were the remaining 9% for which one of the above explanations cannot be denied completely, but it is very unlikely (to be explained by one of the previous explanations).

(TO BE CONTINUED)

(Eds. - Hermann Oberth's lecture notes, written in 1954, will be continued in the next issue of The Bulletin. From his notes, translated from the German by M. Blumrich, we will be publishing further excerpts. Follow his comments on "The Real UFOs".)

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#### SOCIETY NOTICES

GENERAL MEETINGS: Members are reminded that General Meetings will be held on the second Friday evening of each month in The Theatrette, Lower Ground Level, National Mutual Centre, 447 Collins St., commencing at 8 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Friday, February 11, and will feature space films and a report on a recent "flap" of sightings in Tasmania.

Supper will be served at this meeting. Members are invited to bring their friends to all meetings.

SIGHTINGS INVESTIGATIONS: The Committee would be glad to hear from any member prepared to assist the Sightings Investigations Officer. No special qualifications are required.

LIBRARY: Members are requested not to enclose money when returning books. Please send all money under separate cover to:- P.O. Box 43, Moorabbin 3189.

Packages of returning books have been arriving in torn and mutilated wrapping from which much of the content has been lost.

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WITH THIS, THE FIRST NEWSLETTER OF 1972, THE COMMITTEE  
EXTENDS TO ALL MEMBERS AND READERS ITS BEST WISHES FOR  
A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

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